GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Remarks by Honorable Julian Fraser Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change Government of the Virgin Islands as Outgoing Chairperson of the Council of Ministers: Environmental Sustainability

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Remarks by Honorable Julian Fraser

Deputy Premier and Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change

Government of the Virgin Islands

as Outgoing Chairperson of the Council of Ministers: Environmental Sustainability

12th Meeting: 29th April 2025 – Antigua & Barbuda

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to present brief remarks as the outgoing Chairman of the OECS Council of Ministers: Environmental Sustainability on the occasion of our 12th regular meeting.

I extend sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, and their Minister for Health, Wellness and Environment, incoming chairperson of this Council, Honorable Sir Molwyn Joseph, for their warm welcome and kind hospitality.

I also extend greetings to fellow Ministers and heads of delegation, along with your technical teams and the development partners who are present here today.

I acknowledge the presence, and extend greetings to Dr Didacus Jules, Director General of the OECS and thank him for his remarks, which opened this meeting.

Greetings are also extended to Mr Chamberlain Emmanuel, Head of the Environmental Sustainability Division from the OECS Commission and his hardworking team for their work in convening this meeting.

In 2024, Dr. the Hon. Natalio D. Wheatley, Premier and *then* Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change of the Government of the Virgin Islands, was privileged to assume the Chairmanship of the eleventh regular meeting of the Council of Ministers on environmental sustainability.

The theme, *“From Aspiration to Focused Action”,* underscored our collective commitment to urgent action to address the environmental issues we face as a region.

That meeting was postponed but eventually held in the wake of the passage of Hurricane Beryl and the devastation it caused in St Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada, particularly the island of Carriacou.

Beryl was the earliest category four Atlantic hurricane on record and a stark reminder of climate predictions for our region, which signal that a pattern of rapidly intensifying hurricanes, similar to Beryl, is likely to continue.

Six months ago, I was appointed Minister for Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change in the Virgin Islands, just three months into the abbreviated nine months term, of the Virgin Islands' chairmanship of this Council, so I was not afforded the privilege of working with all of you throughout the course of the term. No fault of yours, but in-fact a reality of Parliamentary Democracy.

However, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Virgin Islands, I wish to express my gratitude for your support throughout the term as we worked to advance initiatives and frameworks by the OECS Commission in the interest of our countries and territories, particularly the Road Map to 2030.

This year's theme, "Staying the Course in Perilous Times: Sustainable Transformation and Resilient Prosperity", points to our commitment to adapting and thriving despite the uncertainties in the world economy, and I pledge my support to Honorable Joseph as incoming Chair.

I wish him and the entire Council of Ministers all the best for a successful meeting today and a well-executed work program throughout this year.

I thank you.